



# SHARING THE ROAD SAFELY

# 14

## The Road Has Many Users

Our streets and highways are becoming more crowded every day. Drivers are not the only people using these roadways. They share the highways with many other users:

- Pedestrians
- Bicyclists
- Motorcyclists and moped riders
- Large trucks and buses
- Even animals

Other people have certain rights and privileges on the highways of which automobile drivers must be aware and must respect. As a driver or user of the road, you need to know and practice the rules for sharing the road safely and defensive driving. You should always be aware of the traffic around you and be prepared for emergency situations. A two-ton automobile can be a dangerous weapon. Use common sense and courtesy with other highway users.

Your responsibility as a defensive driver includes making allowances for and adapting to the other people and vehicles on the road. There are skills and techniques you should use for sharing the road. Knowing what to do and how to do it can help you stay alive and avoid damaging your car or someone else's vehicle or causing bodily injury to other highway users.



## SHARING THE ROAD WITH PEDESTRIANS

"Pedestrians" include people walking, skateboarders, in-line or roller skaters, and the disabled who use wheelchairs, walkers, tricycles, or similar supports. As a driver you must recognize the special safety needs of pedestrians. You should be especially alert for young, elderly, disabled and intoxicated pedestrians. They are the most frequent victims in auto-pedestrian collisions.

Generally, pedestrians have the right of way at all intersections. There is a crosswalk at every intersection, even if painted lines and boundaries do not mark the crossing. Crosswalks are intended to encourage people to cross only at certain locations. As you know, some people will cross when and where they want to, regardless of traffic signals, marked crossings, or even their own safety. As the person controlling a potentially dangerous machine, it's your job to "play it safe" where pedestrians are concerned and protect them when you see they may be in danger. Regardless of the rules of the road or right-of-way, the law specifically requires YOU, as a driver, to exercise great care and extreme caution to avoid striking pedestrians.

### Your Role as a Driver:

Drivers should not block the crosswalk when stopped at a red light or waiting to make a turn. You also should not stop with a portion of your vehicle overhanging the crosswalk area. Blocking a crosswalk forces pedestrians to go around your car, and puts them in a dangerous situation.

- Be alert to people entering the roadway or crosswalks any place where pedestrian traffic is heavy.
- Be alert to pedestrians to the right of your vehicle and be especially watchful for pedestrians when you are making a right turn.
- You must immediately yield to pedestrians as soon as they step off the curb into the roadway when the pedestrian is on your half of the road/lane or so close to your half of the road that he is in a position of danger.
- Always yield to blind pedestrians carrying a white, metallic, red tipped white cane or using a guide dog.
- Children are often the least predictable pedestrians and the most difficult to see. Take extra care to look out for children in residential areas and at times and places where children are likely to be around. (school zones, playgrounds, parks, near ice cream or snack vendor vehicles/carts, etc.)
- Yield to pedestrians walking on the sidewalk when you're entering or leaving a driveway, public parking garage, alley or parking lot and your path of travel crosses that sidewalk.
- Don't honk your horn, gun your engine, or do anything to rush or scare a pedestrian crossing in front of your car, even if you have the legal right-of-way.



### Your Role as a Pedestrian:

Most of us cross streets every day. We take for granted that we can cross without incident, because most of the time we do. But sometimes we aren't so fortunate. Each year 7,000 pedestrians die and 100,000 are injured in traffic accidents. Young children and the elderly are more likely to be killed or injured in a pedestrian crash.

While it is easy to blame drivers, they are not always responsible for these accidents. All too often, pedestrians are

the cause of such accidents. These senseless tragedies don't have to happen. You can avoid potential injuries and even death by reviewing the advice for safe street crossing. You too will be a pedestrian on occasion. So learn and obey the common sense rules when the roles are reversed.

When you are a pedestrian, do all you can to make yourself visible and to help drivers prevent crashes.

### **WALKING**

- Pedestrians must walk along sidewalks when available. It is unlawful for pedestrians to walk IN the road where there are sidewalks.
- When there are no sidewalks, always walk on the left side of the road facing traffic (the traffic should be coming toward you), this allows you to see any sudden dangers coming at you. Two or more pedestrians should walk in single file and never side by side of each other.
- Wear or carry something white – do not assume that drivers can see you. At night, remember that it is more difficult for drivers to see you; do everything you can to make yourself visible to drivers – use a flashlight or wear clothing reflectors.
- Be alert and ready to move out of the way in case a driver cannot see you. It is not a good idea to walk or jog along busy roadways while wearing radio headphones or listening to a portable disc player. You may not hear important traffic sounds that would help you avoid potential dangers.

### **CROSSING**

- **Before crossing, stop** at the curb, edge of the road, or corner before proceeding.
- **Look left-right-left**, and if it's clear, begin crossing, looking over your shoulder for turning vehicles.
- Continue to check for approaching traffic while crossing.
- At intersections with traffic lights and pedestrian signals, it's important to follow the signals carefully. Pedestrians may cross on a green traffic signal or when you see the WALK signal, following, again, the basic rules for crossing.
- If you are in the middle of the street and the DON'T WALK signal starts flashing, continue walking. You will have time to complete the crossing.
- Pedestrians may NOT cross on a red or yellow traffic light, or on a red-green (i.e. red for turn(s) while green for straight traffic, or vice versa) combined light, unless facing a WALK signal.
- On a green arrow, whether alone or accompanied by a steady red or yellow, you may enter the road ONLY if you can do so safely without interfering with vehicle traffic.
- The WALK signal and the green traffic light indicate that it's your turn to cross the street, but they do NOT mean it is SAFE to cross. The WALK signal and the GREEN



light mean LOOK, and then, IF it's safe, proceed to cross.

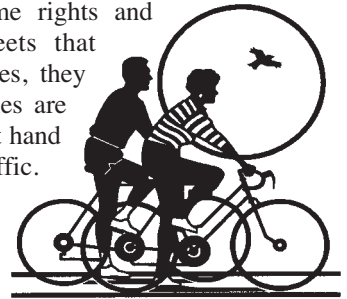
- Although drivers must yield to pedestrians crossing the roadway, pedestrians must not suddenly leave a curb or other safe waiting place and walk into the path of vehicle traffic if it is so close that it is an immediate hazard. Vehicles cannot stop at once!



Remember to make eye contact with drivers to ensure they see you. Don't take a walk signal, a green traffic light, or a driver for granted. Crossing safely is YOUR responsibility. Remember, it's up to you.

### **Sharing The Road With Bicycles**

Bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities on the streets that drivers do, and in most cases, they must share the lane. Bicycles are required to travel on the right hand side of the road with other traffic. Bicyclists are not allowed to travel facing traffic, since this is far less safe. They must ride as near to the right hand side of the road as practical, while avoiding road hazards that could cause them to swerve into traffic. When you're sharing the road with bicycles, you should always expect the rider to make sudden moves. Trash, minor oil slicks, a pothole or crack in the concrete, a barking dog, a parked car or a car door opening, and other surprises can force a bicycle rider to swerve suddenly in front of you.



Similarly, when cyclists are traveling past parked cars, they tend to move away from the cars, toward the center of the lane. This is to avoid injuring, or being injured by, persons getting out of those cars. In such cases, the bicyclist is operating the bicycle properly. If possible, give the cyclist the entire lane. When road conditions prevent this, pass the cyclist with extreme caution. Cyclists who are not on the extreme right hand side of the lane are not being careless, but are in fact attempting to account for traffic conditions and/or preparing to make a left turn.

Bicycles are hard to see. The riders are exposed and easily injured in a collision. Oncoming bicycle traffic is often overlooked or its speed misjudged.

#### **Safety Tips for Drivers:**

- The most common causes of collisions are drivers turning left in front of an oncoming bicycle or turning right, across the path of the bicycle.
- Drivers often fail to pick the bicyclist out of the traffic scene, or inaccurately judge the speed of cyclists making a left turn.
- Drivers overtaking a bicyclist, then making a right turn in front of the cyclist is also a cause of many accidents. Look once, then again, make sure you see the cyclist and know his speed before you turn.
- Merge with bicycle traffic when preparing for a right turn. Don't turn directly across the path of a bicyclist.

- Watch for bicycle riders turning in front of you without looking or signaling, especially if the rider is a child.
- Most bicyclists maintain eye contact with drivers of vehicles around them, particularly when the cyclist or vehicle is making a turn. Before turning, a driver should attempt to gain and maintain eye contact with the bicyclist to ensure a safer turn.
- **Allow plenty of room when passing a bicycle rider.**
  - A driver should NEVER attempt passing between a bicyclist and oncoming vehicles on a two-lane road. Slow down and allow vehicles to pass. Then move to the left to allow plenty of room to pass the rider safely. Leave at least three feet of space between your car and a cyclist when passing.
  - NEVER pass a bicycle if the street is too narrow or you would force the bicyclist too close to parked vehicles. Wait until there is enough room to let you pass safely.
  - If you are about to pass a bicycle on a narrow road and you think the rider doesn't know you're coming, tap your horn gently and briefly as a signal that you're going to pass. Don't blast your horn or otherwise startle or try to intimidate the rider.
- **Residential Areas Are Danger Zones:**

Bicyclists may ride in the middle of the street and disregard stop signs and traffic signals. BE CAREFUL in all neighborhood areas where children and teenagers might be riding.

- Children riding bicycles create special problems for drivers. Children are not capable of proper judgment in determining traffic conditions, therefore drivers should be alert to the possibility of erratic movement and sudden changes in direction when children on bicycles are present.
- Watch out for bikes coming out from driveways or from behind parked cars or other obstructions.
- Bicyclists riding at night present visibility problems for drivers. At night, watch the side of the road for bicyclists. Bicyclists are required to have proper illumination, a front light and rear reflector, but drivers should be aware that bicyclists are not easily seen. Lights from approaching traffic may make them even harder to see at night.
- If you see a bicyclist with a red or orange pennant flag on an antennae attached to the bike, slow down; this is a common symbol to indicate the rider has impaired hearing.

#### **Lane Positions for Bicycles:**

Bicycle riders are required to ride as far right in the lane as possible only when a car and a bicycle, side by side, can safely share the lane. Even then, there are certain times when a bicycle can take the full lane. **A bicyclist should be allowed full use of the lane when:**

- The rider is overtaking and passing another vehicle going in the same direction.
- If the lane is marked and signed (as shown at right) for bicycle use only, drivers must NEVER use that lane as a



turning lane, passing lane or for parking.

- The bicyclist is getting in place for a left turn at an intersection or turning left into a private road or driveway.
- There are unsafe conditions in the roadway, such as parked cars, moving vehicles or machinery, fixed obstacles, pedestrians, animals, potholes or debris.
- The lane is too narrow for both a car and a bicycle to safely share the lane. In this case, it is safest to let the bicycle take the full lane.

To learn more specifics on bicycle riding and safety contact:

The League of American Bicyclists  
1612 K Street NW, Suite 800  
Washington, D.C. 20006  
202-822-1333  
[www.bikeleague.org](http://www.bikeleague.org)

### **SHARING THE ROAD WITH MOTORCYCLES**

Research shows that two-thirds of car-motorcycle collisions are caused, not by the motorcyclist, but by the driver, who turned in front of the motorcycle.



The drivers didn't see the motorcycles at all or didn't see them until it was too late to avoid the collision.

#### **Why Drivers Don't Always See Motorcyclists**

Drivers tend to look for other cars and trucks, not for motorcycles.

The profile of a motorcycle is narrow and the body is short, making it harder to see and making it harder for a driver to estimate the cycle's distance and speed.

Motorcycle riding requires frequent lane movements to adjust to changing road and traffic conditions.

Motorcycles have the right to the use of the full lane. Riders need the lane's full width to respond to and handle hazards such as potholes, shifting traffic blocking their view or blocking them from being seen, and strong winds or blasts of air from passing vehicles. You must never try to share a lane with a motorcycle, and you should always respect the cycle's space and position in traffic.

#### **Driver Tips for Sharing the Road with Motorcycles:**

- **Passing** – Pass as you would pass a car, and don't pass too close or too fast, as the blast of air can blow a motorcycle out of control.
- **Left turns** – Always signal your intention to turn. Watch for oncoming motorcycles.
- **Following Distance** – Allow at least a two-second following distance, so the motorcycle rider has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. Both cyclists and drivers are more likely to make bad decisions if there is not enough stopping distance or time to see and react to conditions.
- **Check your Blind Spots when Changing Lanes** –



Motorcyclists riding alongside a lane of cars are often out of the view of the driver. An unsuspecting driver may change lanes and clip or hit a motorcycle.

- **Anticipate Motorcyclists' Maneuvers** – A cyclist will change lane position to prepare for upcoming traffic conditions. Expect and allow room for the rider to adjust to road hazards that you can't see. At intersections, where most collisions and injuries occur, wait until the rider's intentions are absolutely clear (turning or going straight) before you move into the path of travel. Be even more careful in difficult driving conditions – rain, wet roads, ice, and heavy winds – when the motorcyclist's braking and handling abilities are impaired.
- **Pay Extra Attention at Night** – You can easily misjudge distance because the single headlight and single tail light of a motorcycle can blend into the lights of other vehicles. Always dim your headlights as you would for cars and trucks.
- **Drive Aware** – Whenever you are on the road or at an intersection with a motorcycle, use extra caution and care. Learn to watch for the narrow profile.

#### ***Hazards that can affect Cyclists' Maneuvers:***

Special conditions and situation may cause problems for cyclists (both bicycle and motorcycle), which drivers need to anticipate. Drivers should be aware of these problems, so they can help share the road safely with cyclists. Here are a few examples:

- Bad weather and slippery surfaces cause greater problems for cyclists than for cars. These conditions create stability problems for all vehicles. Allow more following distance for cyclists when the road surface is wet and slippery. Also be alert to the problem of glare that rain and wet surfaces create, especially at night.
- Strong cross winds can move a cycle out of its lane of travel. Areas where this can happen are wide open, long stretches of highways and bridges. Large, fast-moving trucks sometimes create wind blasts which, under certain conditions, can move the cyclist out of his or her path of travel.
- Railroad grade crossings are a particular hazard to cyclists, and will usually cause them to slow down and possibly zigzag to cross the tracks head on.
- Metal or grated bridges cause a cycle to wobble much more than a car. An experienced cyclist slows down and moves to the center of the lane to allow room for handling the uneven surface. An inexperienced cyclist may become startled and try to quickly change direction. Be prepared for either reaction.

Being aware of these situations and consciously looking for cyclists can help you share the road safely with both bicycles and motorcycles.

To learn more about motorcycle safety, pick up a copy of the Tennessee Motorcycle Operator Manual at any Driver License Station. Good information is also available at: [www.tennessee.gov/safety/mrep](http://www.tennessee.gov/safety/mrep).

## **SHARING THE ROAD WITH LARGE TRUCKS AND BUSES**



You will always be sharing the road with trucks because they haul more freight more miles than any other form of transportation. Trucks are the sole method of delivery and pickup for 77% of America's communities.

A typical tractor-trailer combination, a power unit pulling a loaded semi-trailer hinged to its rear end, may weigh up to 80,000 pounds. Depending on the trailer length, the total length of the combination may exceed 70 feet. On the busiest intercity routes, a driver may encounter double or even triple-trailer combinations sometimes exceeding 100 feet in length.

Trucks that were involved in fatal accidents nationally has decreased by 6% from 1997 to 2001. When driving on the highway you are at a serious disadvantage if involved in a crash with a larger vehicle. In crashes involving large trucks, the occupants of a car, usually the driver, sustain 78% of fatalities.

Many truck-car crashes could be avoided if drivers know about truck (and bus) limitations and how to steer clear of unsafe situations involving large vehicles. Seems obvious, doesn't it? But the fact is that while most people realize that it is more difficult to drive a truck than a car, many don't know exactly what a truck's limitations are in terms of maneuverability, stopping distances, and blind-spots. Remember: Large trucks, recreational vehicles, and buses are not simply big cars. **The bigger they are:**

1. The bigger their blind spots, trucks have deep blind spots in front, behind and on both sides.
2. The longer it takes them to stop, a car traveling at 55 M.P.H. can stop in about 240 feet; however, a truck traveling at that speed takes about 450+ feet to stop.
3. The more room they need to maneuver, such as making right turns. Trucks must swing wide to the left to safely negotiate a right turn. They cannot see cars behind or beside them.
4. The longer it takes an automobile to pass them.
5. As stated above the more likely you are to be the "loser" in a collision.

Truck drivers are always watching for smaller vehicles and working to avoid collisions. There are some techniques that you can use to help them – and yourself – share the road safely and reduce the likelihood of a collision with a large vehicle.

Do NOT enter a roadway in front of a large vehicle, a truck or bus can't slow down or stop as quickly as an automobile. By pulling out in front of these vehicles you could easily cause a rear-end collision.

Avoid driving directly behind a truck or bus. Keep a reasonable distance between your car and the large vehicle

ahead; this way you will have a better view of the road to anticipate problems, and you will give yourself room for an emergency “out”.

- Do NOT cut abruptly in front of a large vehicle; if you are exiting, it will only take a few extra seconds to slow down and exit behind the truck. Cutting off a large vehicle on the Interstate is particularly dangerous because of the high speeds being traveled.
- When passing a large vehicle do not pull back over into the lane in front of the truck unless you can see the whole front of the vehicle in your rearview mirror. Do NOT slow down once you are in front of the truck.
- Position your vehicle so you are outside the truck driver’s “blind spots”, and be sure the truck driver can see YOU in the side rearview mirror. **If you can’t see the truck’s mirror, the driver can’t see YOU.** A truck’s blind spots are immediately in front, on either side of the car, and up to 200 feet in the rear. A trucker may not be able to see the road directly in front of the cab. If the tractor has a long hood, the trucker may not be able to see the first 10-20 feet in front of the bumper – plenty of room for a car to slip unnoticed into a dangerous position.
- If you’re stopped behind a truck on an uphill grade, stay to the left in your lane so the driver can see you. When stopped in a traffic lane, leave extra space in front of your car in case the truck rolls back when it starts to move.
- Pay close attention to the large vehicle’s turn signals. Because trucks make wide right turns, they need to swing to the left before turning right – make sure you know which way the vehicle is turning before trying to pass.
- Do not linger beside a large vehicle, because you may not be visible to the driver in the wide area the truck needs for maneuvering a turn.
- When you are near a Commercial Vehicle Weigh Station, avoid driving in the right lane so slow-moving trucks can easily merge back onto the roadway.
- Dim your lights at night. Bright lights reflected in the mirrors can blind the driver.
- In rainy conditions, stay back. Spray and splash back from the rear wheels can cover your windshield with sheets of water, mud and road film.
- Never underestimate the size and speed of approaching trucks or buses. Because of their large size they often appear to be traveling more slowly than their actual speed.

### Risky Situations with Large Vehicles

**Passing a Large Vehicle:** A tractor-trailer or other combination vehicles, takes a longer time and requires more space to get around than passing a car.

- On a two-way road, leave yourself more time and space when passing these large vehicles. Check to your front and rear and move into the passing lane only



if it is clear and you are in a legal passing zone.

- If the truck or bus driver blinks the truck’s lights after you pass, it’s a signal that you are cleared to pull back in front of the truck. Move back only when you can see the front of the truck in your rearview mirror.
- Remember that on an upgrade or steep hill, a large vehicle usually loses speed.
- Because of their weight, trucks travel faster downhill and you may have to increase your speed to pass a truck on a downhill grade. Complete your pass as quickly as possible and don’t stay alongside the truck. After you pass, maintain your speed. Don’t pass a truck, then slow down, making the truck driver brake while traveling downhill.
- When a truck passes you, you can help the driver by keeping to the far side of your lane and reducing your speed slightly. **NEVER SPEED UP AS A TRUCK OR BUS IS PASSING.**
- When you meet a truck/bus coming from the opposite direction, keep as far as possible to the right of the road to avoid being sideswiped and to reduce wind turbulence between vehicles. The turbulence **PUSHES** vehicles **APART**, it does NOT suck them together.

### The “Right Turn Squeeze”:

Trucks make wide right turns and often must leave and open space on the right side. Do NOT move into that space or try to pass a truck if it might be making a right turn. If you are between the truck and the curb, the driver may not be able to see you and your car can be crushed or sideswiped by the truck’s trailer.



**A Truck Backing Up:** When a truck is trying to back into a loading dock, there may be no choice except to block the roadway for a short time. Never try to cross behind a truck when it is preparing to back up. This is a high-collision situation because you will be in the driver’s blind spots. Give the driver plenty of room and wait patiently for the few minutes it takes to complete the maneuver.

**Maintaining a Safety Cushion with Large Vehicles:** As stated previously trucks and buses need more maneuvering room and stopping distance than small vehicles. A good safety strategy for car drivers is to leave plenty of space between your car and the larger vehicle, especially in these situations:

If you are driving in front of a truck, keep you speed up so that you maintain a safe distance in front of the truck. Always indicate your intention to turn or change lanes early enough for the driver of the truck or bus to prepare for your maneuver. Avoid sudden moves, slow downs or stops.

Don’t cut in front of a truck or bus, or you remove the driver’s cushion of safety.

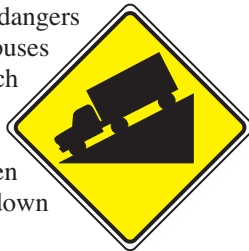
When following a truck or bus, it is a good idea to add more following distance. A safety cushion of at least 3 to 4 seconds is recommended.

If rain or water is standing on the road, spray from a truck

passing you, or one you are trying to pass, will seriously reduce your vision. You should move as far away from the truck as you can, while staying in your lane.

Don't drive too close to trucks that are carrying hazardous materials, since they make frequent stops, such as at railroad crossings.

**Hills or Mountain Roads:** Beware of dangers caused by slower moving trucks or buses on steep hills or mountain roads. Watch for slow moving trucks or buses going both up and down hills. Heavy vehicles cannot maintain speed when climbing hills and must go slowly down hills to stay under control.



Watch for trucks or buses that may be in trouble. Smoking wheels or a high speed can be a sign of brake loss. If you encounter this situation, fall back, and DO NOT pass.

**Runaway ramps:** These ramps are designed to stop out-of-control trucks or buses going down steep downgrades. Vehicles should never be stopped or parked in these areas.

### Learn the "NO ZONES" for large vehicles:

Many motorists falsely assume that trucks and buses can see the road better because they sit twice as high as the driver of a small vehicle. While trucks and buses do enjoy a better forward view and have bigger mirrors, they have serious blind spots into which a small vehicle can disappear from view.

The NO-ZONE represents danger areas around trucks and buses where crashes are more likely to occur.

1. The area approximately up to 20 feet directly in front of a large vehicle is considered a NO-ZONE. When small vehicles cut in too soon after passing or changing lanes, then abruptly slow down, trucks and buses are forced to compensate with very little time of room to spare.



2. Unlike small vehicles, trucks and buses have deep blind spots directly behind them. Avoid following too closely in this NO-ZONE. If you stay in the rear blind spot of a large vehicle, you increase the possibility of a traffic crash. The truck/bus driver cannot see your car, and your view of the traffic ahead will be severely reduced.
3. Large vehicles have much larger blind spots on both sides than cars do. When you drive in these blind spots for any length of time, the vehicle's driver cannot see you. When passing even if the vehicle's driver knows you are there, remaining alongside a large vehicle too long, you make it impossible for the driver to take evasive action if an obstacle appears in the roadway ahead. If the truck or bus driver needs to swerve or change lanes for any reason, a serious crash could occur if any vehicle is in either of these NO-ZONES.

4. Truck and bus drivers often cannot see vehicles directly behind or beside them when they are attempting to safely negotiate a right turn. If you cut in between the truck or bus and the curb or shoulder to the right it greatly increases the possibility of a crash in this "right turn squeeze".

For more details on operating commercial trucks or buses pick up a copy of the Tennessee Commercial Driver License Manual at any Driver License Station. Also more safety information is available through U.S. Department of Transportation at:

[www.sharetheroadsafely.org](http://www.sharetheroadsafely.org)

[www.nozone.org](http://www.nozone.org)

[www.fmcsa.dot.gov](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov)

— OR —

Tennessee Trucking Association

4531 Trousdale Drive

Nashville, TN 37204

(615) 777-2882

[www.tntrucking.org](http://www.tntrucking.org)

### SHARING THE ROAD WITH TRAINS

Actually, you don't share the road with trains – you stop and let them have the right-of-way! You can stop your car suddenly but a train can't. **Drivers must ALWAYS yield to trains because that's the law.**



- The average car weight 3,000 pounds, and the average loaded train weighs 12 MILLION pounds!
- A train traveling at 55 M.P.H. takes a full mile to stop.
- You are 30 times more likely to die in a collision with a train than in a crash with a car or even a large truck or bus.

Over half the car/train collisions in America happen at crossroads with lights, bells, or gates; and two-thirds of the crashes happen in full daylight.

Why?

**Impatience** – Drivers don't want to wait the 30 seconds to 2 minutes average time it takes for the train to pass through the intersection. They try to beat the train. In 1996 across the U.S., over 4,000 cars and trucks were hit at crossings because the trains beat them. More than 1,500 drivers and passengers were hurt and 415 died. Don't let yourself or your family and friends be one of these statistics.

**Negligence** – When drivers see a railroad crossing sign or warning, they don't respect the potential for danger; they cross the tracks without looking, listening, or stopping. Most of the collisions occur within 25 miles of the driver's home, suggesting that drivers KNEW the tracks were there and they were in the habit of crossing without looking.

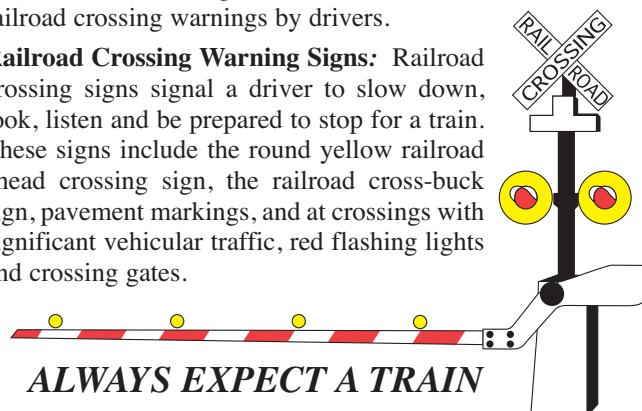
**If you are on a collision course with a train, only YOU can avoid the collision. The train cannot stop in time or swerve to avoid you.**



## Stopping For Railroad Crossings

Countless people lose their lives or suffer tragic injuries due to train/vehicle collisions. Invariably, the cause for such collisions is the disregard, and often the willful evasion, of railroad crossing warnings by drivers.

**Railroad Crossing Warning Signs:** Railroad crossing signs signal a driver to slow down, look, listen and be prepared to stop for a train. These signs include the round yellow railroad ahead crossing sign, the railroad cross-buck sign, pavement markings, and at crossings with significant vehicular traffic, red flashing lights and crossing gates.



**Railroad Crossing Stop Signs:** If you approach a railroad crossing at which a stop sign is posted, you must come to a complete stop and proceed across the tracks only after looking both ways to make sure a train is not approaching. Never assume the track is not used or a train is not approaching.

### Safety Guidelines for Railroad Crossings:

**Obey the Warning Signs:** Look both ways and **LISTEN**, because you may have to stop. Expect a train on any track at any time. Don't trust a "schedule" because trains can cross at any time. Due to the size of trains, the actual speed of a train can be very deceiving.

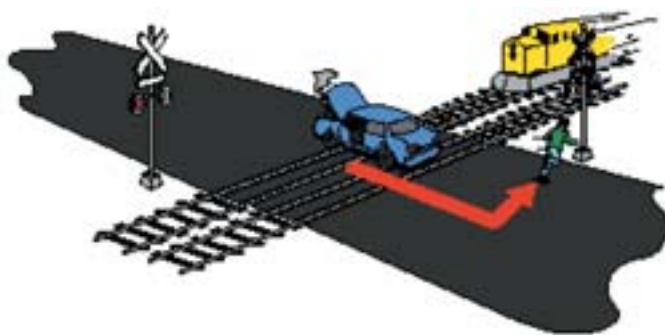
**Don't Attempt to "Beat the Train":** Under no circumstances attempt to race a train to a crossing. If you lose, you will never race again.

**Don't Try to "Evade the Gates":** Never drive around a crossing gate that has extended down. If the gates are down, stop and stay in place. It's against the law to drive through lowered gates. Don't cross the tracks until the gates are fully raised and the lights have stopped flashing.

**When Approaching a Railroad Crossing:** Slow down far enough ahead of the crossing to be certain that you can stop when you reach the point where a train could first be seen. Railroad crossings equipped with electric or mechanical signal devices require the operator to bring his vehicle to a complete stop within 50 feet, and no closer than 15 feet from the nearest rail and shall not proceed until he can do so safely.

**Avoid Stopping on the Railroad Tracks:** Never proceed to cross the tracks unless you can legally clear all tracks without stopping. If you are crossing the tracks and the warning lights begin flashing or the gates start coming down, don't stop. **KEEP MOVING!** The warning signals will allow enough time for you to finish driving through the crossing before the train arrives. The gate on the far side of the tracks will not block you in. Do NOT try to back up.

**If your vehicle stalls on the tracks,** all occupants should exit the vehicle immediately and get off the tracks. If a train is coming, get away from the tracks and run toward the direction from which the train is coming (away from the point of impact) as shown in the illustration above. If no train is in sight, post lookouts and try to start the vehicle or push it off



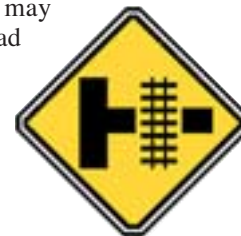
the tracks. If you are alone notify local law enforcement for assistance. Look to see that no train is approaching the crossing and carefully proceed to have the vehicle removed from the tracks.

*Your car is replaceable. You aren't!!  
No vehicle is worth a human life.*

**Watch for Additional Trains:** Where there is more than one track, a driver waiting for one train to pass must make sure another train is not approaching from the opposite direction. Once the first train has cleared the tracks, caution should be taken that a second train is NOT proceeding in the opposite direction. Don't go across the tracks until you are sure that no other train is coming on another track from either direction.

**Watch for Vehicles that Must Stop at Highway- Railway Crossings:** School Buses, Passenger Buses and Trucks carrying hazardous materials must stop at all crossings whether signals are activated or not. Never attempt to pass such a stopped vehicle on a two-way road. For safety's sake do NOT pass such stopped vehicles on a multi-lane roadway unless the crossing is clearly marked with signal lights and/or gates that are NOT activated. Otherwise the stopped vehicle in the right lane may block your clear view of the tracks.

**Intersection Warning Signs:** Some variation of the sign shown at right will be posted prior to intersections or crossroads where railroad tracks cross one of the roadways. Always be alert and pay attention to these signs as they give you advance warning that you may encounter a train if turning onto the road indicated in the sign.



For more information on Railroad Crossing Safety contact:

Federal Railroad Administration  
Office of Public Affairs (Stop 5)  
1120 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20590  
[www.fra.dot.gov](http://www.fra.dot.gov)  
— or —

Tennessee Operation Lifesaver at: [www.tnol.org](http://www.tnol.org)

## **SHARING THE ROAD WITH SCHOOL BUSES**

School buses are one of the safest forms of transportation in the nation – nearly 2,000 times safer than the family car. Accidents are rare because school districts and the school bus

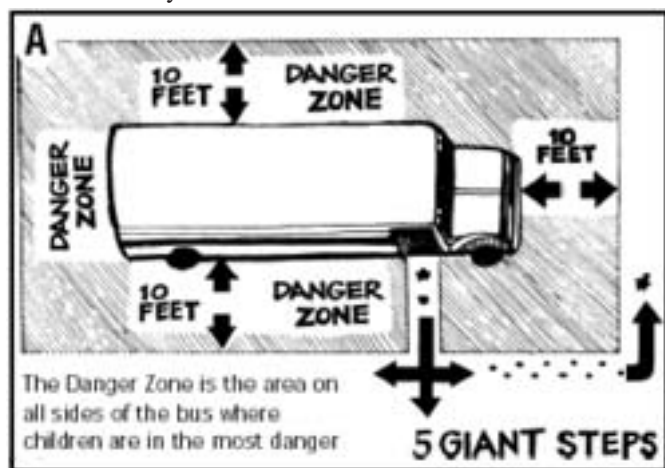
contractors who serve them work hard to train drivers to avoid accidents.

The reality of school bus safety is that more children are hurt outside a bus than inside one. ***Children are at the greatest risk when they are getting on or off the school bus.*** Most of the children killed in bus related crashes are pedestrians, five to seven years old; they are hit by the bus or by motorists illegally passing a stopped school bus. In fact pedestrian fatalities while loading and unloading school buses accounted for nearly three out of every four fatalities.

The child who bends over to retrieve a dropped school paper, or who walks too close to the bus while crossing the street, needs to be aware that every yellow school bus is surrounded by a danger zone.

This Danger Zone is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of being hit. Children should stay ten feet away from the school bus and NEVER go behind the bus.

In many school districts, children are taught to escape from that zone by taking five giant steps as soon as they leave the bus. If they must cross the street after exiting, they are taught to cross at least five giant steps in front of the bus – and to be sure they're able to be seen by the school bus driver and can maintain eye contact with the driver.



Perhaps the most difficult thing to teach children, especially young children, is not to go back to pick up items they've dropped near the bus, or left on the bus.

Parents and other adults must also do their part. ***For instance, most drivers need to learn to share the road with school buses and stop when the bus stops to take on or let off passengers.*** If we all do our part – if drivers heed school bus warning lights, bus drivers drive defensively, parents help their children learn to ride safely and children learn to avoid the bus's danger zone – it can be safer still to ride to and from school in that yellow bus.

#### Safety Tips For Drivers

- Drivers must be familiar with the Danger Zone. Since children are taught to take the "five giant steps" from the school bus for safety, drivers must ensure that they stop far enough from the bus to allow for this needed safety space. **Stay at least 20 feet away from any stopped school bus.**
- **STOP** when the bus's warning lights are flashing, or the stop arm comes out.

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, **watch out for children** walking to the bus stop or walking or bicycling to school.
- **Slow Down.** Watch for children walking in the street, especially where there is no sidewalk. Watch for children playing and gathering near bus stops.
- **Be Alert.** Children arriving late for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.
- **Obey School Zone Speeds.** Be sure to pay attention to posted speed zones near schools and slow to the proper speed limit when the zone warning lights are flashing and/or during posted hours if not equipped with warning lights.

When driving in neighborhoods and especially in school zones, and near bus stops; **watch out for young people** who may be thinking about getting to school, but may not be thinking about getting there safely or the traffic around them. Every driver should remember the following about elementary school children:

- They become easily distracted and may start across the street without warning.
- They don't understand the dangers of moving vehicles
- They can't judge vehicle speeds or distances.
- They may be blocked from your view by the bus or other objects, shrubs, trees, or parked vehicles.
- **MOST IMPORTANTLY, CHILDREN EXPECT VEHICLES TO STOP FOR THEM AT THE SCHOOL BUS STOP.**

For more information on School Zone and School Bus Safety contact:

Tennessee DOS – Pupil Transportation  
1148 Foster Avenue  
Nashville, TN 37210  
(615) 687-2302

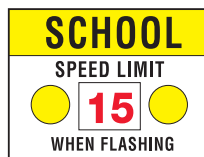
#### **SHARING THE ROAD WITH SLOW-MOVING VEHICLES**

Be alert for slow-moving vehicles, especially in rural areas. Driving on empty rural highways can be just as dangerous as driving in heavy city traffic. It is easy to relax your attention...and suddenly come upon a dangerous surprise. Animals in the road, farm equipment moving from one field to another, horse drawn vehicles just over the crest of a hill, or a low spot covered with water are not unusual hazards in rural driving.

Stay alert, watch for warning signs, and slow down when approaching curves or hills that block your view of the roadway ahead. The

"slow moving vehicle" emblem, a fluorescent or reflective orange triangle, must be displayed on the rear of vehicles

drawn by animals, and most farm vehicles and construction equipment. Use caution when





approaching a slow moving vehicle and be sure it is safe before you pass. Be especially alert for:

**Farm Machinery:** Watch for tractors, combines, and other farm equipment moving across the road and traveling on state highways in rural areas. This type equipment can be very large and wide enough to take up more than one traffic lane. Farm machinery usually does not have turn signals and to make a right turn, operators of farm machinery may first pull wide to the left, then turn to the right. In most cases, these vehicles will be traveling at less than 25 M.P.H. Coming over the top of a hill at 55 M.P.H. to find a large slow-moving tractor in front of you is a frightening and dangerous experience. Expect the unexpected and be prepared to protect yourself and your passengers.

**Horse Drawn Carriages:** In some areas of Tennessee you may be sharing the road with animal-drawn vehicles. They have the same rights to use the road as a motor vehicle and must follow the same rules of the road. They are subject to heavy damage and injury to the occupants if hit by a car. Warning signs will be posted in areas where you are likely to find animal-drawn vehicles. Be Alert!

**Horseback Riders:** Horseback riders are subject to, and protected by, the rules of the road. They also must ride single file near the right curb or road edge, or on a usable right shoulder, lane or path. The law requires you to exercise due care when approaching a horse being ridden or led along a road. Areas where horseback riding is common will usually be marked with an advisory sign like the one shown above. You must drive at a reasonable speed, and at a reasonable distance away from the horse. Do NOT sound your horn or “rev” your engine loudly when approaching or passing a horse.

## **SHARING THE ROAD WITH HIGHWAY WORK ZONES**

### **Work Zone Safety: It’s Everybody’s Business**

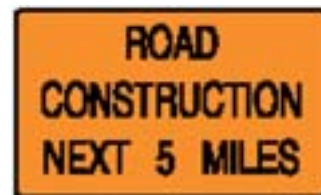
Work zones on U.S. highways have become increasingly dangerous places for both workers and travelers, with the death rate approaching two per day. Approximately 40,000 people per year are injured as a result of crashes in work zones. With more than 70,000 work zones in place across America on a given day, highway agencies are realizing that it is not enough to focus on improving the devices used in the work zone areas, but that they must also reach out to the public in order to change the behavior of drivers so that crashes can be prevented.

**What is a Work Zone?** A work zone is any type of road work that may impede traffic conditions. Many work zones involve lane closures. They may also be on the shoulder or in the median. Moving work zones such as sweepers, line painting trucks, or mowing equipment and workers are also quite common.

Highway work zones are set up according to the type of road and the work to be done on the road. There are a number of events that make up a work zone. They can be long-term projects of short term actions. A work zone can also exist at anytime of the year. The common theme among work zones is the color orange. Work zone materials such as cones,

barrels, signs, large vehicles, or orange vests on workers give you an indication that you are either approaching a work zone or are already in a work zone.

**What do you do when approaching a Work Zone?** Watch for the color orange – it always means: “road work—slow down”. All temporary signs in work zones have an orange background and black letters or symbols. These signs will be found on the right side of the road, or on both left and right sides when the roadway is a divided highway, and they will tell you what (one lane traffic, uneven lanes, etc.) and how soon (miles or feet ahead) you will encounter the work zone. Most work zones also have signs alerting you to reductions in the speed limit through the work zone.



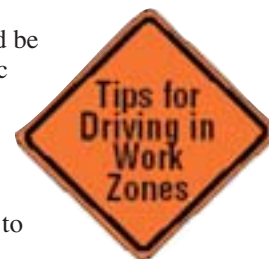
These speed reductions are necessary for the safety of the workers and motorists. The reduced speed limits are clearly posted within the work zone and if there are no reduced speed limit postings, drivers should obey the normal posted speed limit. Under Tennessee law, speed violations that occur in the work zones where the speed has been reduced and where employees of the DOT and/or construction workers are present will result in a fine up to a maximum of \$500 dollars.

### **What should you do when driving through Work Zones?**

Signing, traffic control devices, roadway markings, flaggers, and law enforcement officers are used to protect highway workers and to direct drivers safely through work zones or along carefully marked detours.

As a driver you should learn and abide by the following safety tips for driving in work zones:

- **Slow down and pay full attention to the driving situation!** A car traveling 60 M.P.H. travels 88 feet per second. If you see a sign that says “Road Work 1500 Feet”, you’ll be in that construction zone in 17 seconds!
- **Follow the instructions** on the road work zone warning signs and those given by flaggers.
- **Avoid complacency.** Don’t become oblivious to work zone signs when the work is long term or widespread.
- **Be aware** that traffic patterns in work zones can change daily including lane shifts or alternating lane closures.
- **Use extreme caution** when driving through a work zone at night whether workers are present or not.
- **Calm down.** Work zones aren’t there to personally inconvenience you. They’re there to improve the roads for everyone.
- **Watch the traffic** around you, and be prepared to react to what the traffic is doing. Check the taillights/brake lights of vehicles ahead of you for indications of what is happening on the road ahead. Be ready to respond quickly.



- **Merge as soon as possible.** Motorists can help maintain traffic flow and posted speeds by moving to the appropriate lane at first notice of an approaching work zone.
- **Obey the posted speed limits.** Workers could be present just a few feet away.
- **Adjust your lane position** away from the side workers and equipment when possible.
- **Keep a safe distance** between your vehicle and traffic barriers, trucks, construction equipment and workers. **Don't tailgate!**
- Some work zones – like line painting, road patching and mowing – are mobile. Just because you don't see the workers immediately after you see the warning signs doesn't mean they're not out there. Observe the posted signs until you see the one that says "End Road Work".
- **Use total concentration** when driving through work zones. Pay attention to your surroundings. This is not the time to use the cellular phone, change the radio station, read the paper, apply make-up, shave or fill out the expense report.
- **Avoid road work zones** altogether by using alternate routes, when you can.
- **Expect delays;** plan for them and leave early to reach your destination on time.



*One of the best safety precautions you can do to protect your life and the lives of you passengers is **ALWAYS WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT.***

#### ***Some Final Safety Reminders To Think About:***

The color orange is a signal to motorists that a work zone is near. When you see orange, use common sense, caution and concentration as you drive through these areas.

Everyone has a right to a safe workplace. The roads are a construction or maintenance worker's job. One careless mistake by a motorist and a worker could be killed or injured. So could the motorist.

Don't expect the road workers to see you coming. They may be concentrating more on work than on the traffic.

The lives of highway construction workers depend on drivers like you obeying the posted speed limits in work zones.

#### ***SEE ORANGE, NOT RED***

*Work zones are no place for impatience or aggressive driving. After all, they're there to make the roads better and safer for you. The extra seconds or minutes it takes to get through a work zone are a small price to pay for years of safer driving.*

For more information on Work Zone Safety visit these websites:

<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov>